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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000399

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SUBJECT: UK HIGH COMMISSIONER TO PAKISTAN BRIEFS NATO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Kate M. Byrnes for Reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Robert Brinkley, UK High Commissioner to Pakistan, told NATO PermReps October 21 that Pakistan has a profound sense of insecurity and sees its relationship with Afghanistan through an "Indian lens." He relayed that Pakistan is not confident the international community will remain in Afghanistan, so it is hedging its bets to provide flexibility for future influence. Additionally, he noted several issues, including financial difficulties and crumbling government services in the tribal areas, were affecting Pakistan's ability to act. He notes some positive areas: the government's offensive against militants in the tribal areas, the fact that NATO supply lines remain open and flowing, and Pakistan's commitments to continuing consultations with India. Asked by several Perm Reps what NATO can do to support Pakistan without being seen as imperialistic, Brinkley said the Alliance should be "loyal supporters, friendly critics, and close allies" in dealing with Pakistan. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Robert Brinkley, UK High Commissioner to Pakistan, addressed NATO PermReps October 21 on the Pakistani perspective of Afghanistan, how it evolved and how Pakistan assesses the situation. He noted that Pakistan has a profound sense of insecurity, despite a large army and nuclear weapons, primarily due to India and the contested Kashmir area in the east, but also because of Afghanistan to its west and China to the north. The many battles with India and the loss of Bangladesh in 1971 make Pakistan constantly preoccupied with India and reinforced a strategic view where external threats were prioritized over internal threats. Therefore, Pakistan continues to view Afghanistan through an "Indian lens."

13. (C) Brinkley relayed that despite Pakistan's publicly stated policy of supporting peace and stability in Afghanistan, there are many recurring unofficial refrains, especially from Punjabi elites. These refrains include issues with the over 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan; suspicion of Afghan tribes which are seen as tricky and untrustworthy; and Pakistan's feeling that it is underappreciated despite the significant assistance it has given Afghanistan. Additionally, due to its preoccupation with India, the Pakistanis see Afghanistan as a "zero sum game." The Pakistanis fear conspiracies, including alleged US/UK covert support to Baluchistan and NATO plans to establish a permanent operations base in the region. The Pakistanis, "in somewhat paradoxical terms," do not really want us there, he said, but also feel their future is tied to the West's continued involvement in the region. Because of fears that the International Community (IC) will not stay in

Afghanistan for the long haul, Pakistan "hedges its bets."

¶4. (C) Brinkley relayed several positive points on the Pakistan view. First, Pakistan increasingly sees the threat from the insurgency and the need for concerted action. Pakistan's resolve is still intact, with operations continuing in Bajaur despite the recent domestic bombing attacks, and the public largely rejects suicide bombings and jihad. Brinkley commented that there is some "space for optimism." Examples include: President Zardari's government is engaged in attacking the militants in the tribal areas, NATO supply lines are open and flowing, and Pakistan's commitments to continuing consultations with India.

¶5. (C) On the negative side, the Pakistani public believes Pakistan is paying the price for being a "front line state" in the war against terrorism, but is not getting sufficient credit from the IC for its efforts to promote stability. Brinkley relayed that Pakistan's problems are mainly due to its past policies, which include supporting militants such as Hekmatyr and the Taliban. Additionally, the government in the tribal areas is crumbling, the military is trained/equipped to meet a larger scale Indian threat, and the justice system is "stuck," often taking over 5 years to get a case to trial. The latter, he highlighted, encourages citizens to pursue alternative Islamic justice outlets, where it otherwise might not were secular courts functioning properly.

HOW TO DEAL WITH PAKISTAN

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¶6. (C) Brinkley recommended several actions in dealing with Pakistan. First, although working on a positive relationship with India over Baluchistan is desirable, the true "prize" is peace in Kashmir. He noted that Afghan-Pakistani Joint Border Coordination Centers are a good step forward, and we should push for more Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperation to diffuse tensions along the Durand line. He said the West should praise Pakistan when it performs well. Additionally, we should criticize bad actions and provide advice. Brinkley noted that he would try to share UK intelligence assessments with NATO to the maximum extent possible. He stressed that the price of peace in Pakistan cannot be war in Afghanistan, because this would destabilize the area and lead to further difficulties for Pakistan. He also noted that Pakistan responds differently to the IC when dealing with India, where it desires to keep the IC involved, than with Afghanistan, where it prefers to work bilaterally. Finally, Pakistan's finances were particularly hard hit with increased fuel and food prices, and a civil disturbance crisis situation may be looming.

¶7. (C) To summarize, Brinkley stated that NATO needs Pakistan, needs Pakistan to change by building its counterinsurgency and governance capacity, and changing its policies. We need Pakistan to be capable of grasping various options to deal with its problems. NATO should look at Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single space and avoid the trap of "seeing one through the other's eyes." He stressed that NATO's interests must come first and that we should be "loyal supporters, friendly critics, and close allies" in dealing with Pakistan.

PERMREP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

¶8. (C) PermReps asked a variety of questions to Mr. Brinkley, which ranged from the degree of political support for President Zadari, to what can NATO do to support Pakistan without being seen as imperialistic. Brinkley's responses included the following points:

- Reconciliation is a serious, key debate in Pakistan's political forces, with the government committed to continuing to fight "Pakistan's war, not someone else's."

- On the Comprehensive Approach, the G8 is doing good work coordinating, but needs to go further in implementation. Security is an issue in Pakistan, just as in Afghanistan.

- On increasing insurgent attacks, he thought insurgents felt more freedom to act, but the operations in Bajaur have changed this view. Pakistan has no capacity to deal with all the insurgencies, so it is starting in the North and will then move to the South when able.

- Economically, the IMF estimates Pakistan needs \$4 billion since it currently has only 6 weeks of reserves. China is willing to support with projects but not cash, and the Saudis are unwilling to delay payments for oil. Pakistan has no other alternative, but to go to the IMF for help.

- On Afghan Defense Minister Wardak's proposal to start a Joint Task Force of Afghan, Pakistan and ISAF troops, Brinkley said "why not?" He is unsure if Pakistan has the capacity to support, but it is worth a try.

- On the military role in Pakistani politics, he felt Gen Kayani wanted to stay out of politics and restore the professionalism of the Army leadership.

- The Pakistani Army is hesitant to take advice from others, but will readily take funds or equipment. He did note the recent success with U.S. and UK trainers, but stressed that Pakistan remains suspicious.

- Pakistan's relationship with the UK is warm, unlike some other former colonies, and he does not think NATO will be seen as imperialists.

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